



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Natalie Burfoot Billing, Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Paulann H. Sheets, Thomas J. Skrmetti, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, April 6, 2004

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Billing, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Wright

Members Absent: Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Skrmetti

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Director of Ledge Light Health District Francis Crowley, Director of Public Works Gary Schneider, several RTM members, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

was led by Director of Ledge Light Health District Francis Crowley.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

2004-0128 Proclamation Recognizing National Telecommunicators Week

Read

The proclamation was read by Mayor Watson and presented to Deb Main of the Emergency Dispatch Center.

Presentation of Proclamation to Mayor Watson

Shirley Dunbar-Rose, Chairman of Ledge Light Health Board of Directors, presented a proclamation in recognition of Harry Watson's many years of diligent service on the Board. She expressed gratitude for all his contributions and noted that he will be missed tremendously.

IV. CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Mayor Watson queried the Council about suspending the rules, so that the presentations under new business could be made prior to Citizens' Petitions. The Councilors decided not to suspend the rules to avoid inconveniencing the citizens signed up to speak. Mayor Watson set a time limit of 5 minutes for each speaker.

Carol Moore, 277 Ridgewood Drive, requested the Town Council be proactive in keeping the SubBase open. She stated it is important to have good quality schools in our community as this is a factor that is reviewed by the Base Closure Commission.

Jim Gilman, 122 Midway Oval, stated he is not in favor of the Ordinance for Adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code 2000 for Fort Hill Home Area Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. He is presenting a petition signed by numerous residents of the neighborhood. He requested the Council not to cut any funds from the Community Policing program.

Niel Spillane, 147 High Street, stated he had served as a Town Councilor. He believes all citizens and Councilors have the right to express their individual opinions, beliefs and actions. He worked hard to ensure that a maximum amount of Council business be conducted in the public

eye. He did this to assure the public and to dispel any hint of back room politics. He feels Groton has avoided this impression for the last 30 years. He suggested that any time a consensus is necessary on an issue that all 9 Councilors be involved before that consensus is reached. It is politically, ethically and ultimately legally correct if consensus is conducted in the public eye. He suggested that if future communications depart from a one-on-one discussion, this is an area that the public sees as something unethical and this should be avoided.

Diane Marley, 172 Crosswinds Drive, asked the Council if they are aware of a rumor that the School Superintendent may not submit the Board of Education grant request to the State if the Eastern Point site is approved.

Gordon Lange, 1 Sound Breeze Avenue, enumerated specific facts about the school improvements. He stressed our community needs and deserves new schools. He compared Groton to other local communities that have proceeded with new school construction. He is strongly in favor of the school referendum, and stated that it is time now to save future tax money. He stated construction costs will only continue to rise.

Kevin Trejo, 536 Shennecossett Road, asked how the schools got into such bad shape. He asked why the 1990 five-year plan was eliminated by the Board of Education in one month's time. He advocates that our community build new schools. He announced there will be a tour of the King Property on April 10 at 9:00 and Fitch High School at 10:30; there will be an open hearing in the City of Groton on April 19 for information about the schools.

John Sparkman, 52 Sound Breeze Avenue, stated he will speak at a later date when he can have 10 minutes.

Frank Williams, 149 Seneca Drive, presented a comparison of the Stonington K-12 building project. He stated the schools remain open while construction is proceeding. He is in favor of schools and education. He believes the town must accomplish the necessary school construction and improvements at affordable and minimum cost. He expressed concern about the current maintenance cost for schools and is it sufficient to carry on with all these schools. He thinks it is too expensive.

Jim Musante, 195 Seneca Drive, provided a handout to the Councilors regarding an article from the Hartford Courant about electric magnet fields. He has concerns about exposure since the same power line runs by both the Eastern Point site and King Property. He feels the ordinance questions for the school referendum should be simpler.

Mayor Watson invited Mr. Sparkman to speak if he would limit himself to 5 minutes.

Mr. Sparkman, 52 Sound Breeze Avenue, talked about Councilors' conduct at the March 23 meeting and the handling of the FOI request. He is appreciative of the assistance he receives from the Town Clerk whenever he calls. He ended by requesting the community and the Council to work together for the benefit of the Town.

Mike Doyle, Elm Street, stated that the EMF levels reported are less than what is harmful. The school referendum cost per household will be approximately ten dollars a year for the life of the bond. He stated maintenance costs will only continue to increase if the referendum does not pass.

Rick Norris, 224 West Shore Avenue, spoke about the renovations to Fitch High School. He feels our school building project is much larger than Stonington's. Complete renovations like Stonington's allow for certification for 20 years; repairs do not renew or lengthen the certifications. He emphasized that the Town needs to follow the School Design Plan.

Jeff Armstrong, 63 Meech Avenue, served on the School Design Committee. He pleaded with the Council to follow the School Design Plan and to build on the King Property.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Councilor Billing stated the Council is aware of the rumor concerning the Board of Education. She apologized for not supporting the 1990 five-year School renovation plan when she was serving on the Board of Education. She stated Mr. Trejo's information is correct and she supports the current referendum.

Mayor Watson wants to respond in depth to Mr. Sparkman and requested him to call so they could talk. He explained that he was the subject of the FOI complaint. He stated the process that was followed. The Mayor explained his opinion on the question of quorums.

Councilor Wright stated some facts for clarification of a statement by Mr. Lange in relation to the grant reimbursement costs of the school projects. She responded to Mr. Trejo that the five-year program that was defeated did in fact have a major component completed, namely the expansion of West Side Middle School.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2004-0126 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council of March 16, 2004 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2003-0281 Adoption of Twenty-Third Council Rules and Procedures

2004-0023 Response to 1/9/04 Editorial in The Day Newspaper

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0051 NLC Conference - Legislative Agenda

2004-0076 Public Hearing on Ordinance for Construction of a New Elementary School - Eastern Point

2004-0077 Public Hearing on Ordinance for Demolition of Freeman Hathaway and Construction of a New Elementary School

2004-0078 Public Hearing on Ordinance for Renovations and Additions to Fitch High School

2004-0100 Preparation of Town Council Minutes

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0117 Summer Food Service Program (2004)

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0118 Establishment of Groton Juvenile Review Board

Re-referred

Councilor Wright read the resolution and moved to refer back to Committee of the Whole. She voiced concerns regarding State Statute authorization and enabling legislation for establishment of Juvenile Review Boards.

2004-0108 Historic Documents Preservation Grant

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0116 Department of Education Grant - Youth and Families

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0123 Appointment of Catherine Kolnaski to Ledge Light Health District Board of Directors

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0124 Appointment of Gerald Smith to the Parks and Recreation Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2004-0125 Appointment of Douglas Brandt to the Zoning Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

c. Special Trust Fund Contributions

2004-0107 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

J. Donald and Jean Simpson - \$30.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Eleanor Rickel - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Christopher Caswell - \$50.00 - Library Discretionary

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

d. Tax Refunds

2004-0119 Tax Refund

RESOLUTION APPROVING TAX REFUND

WHEREAS, the following, for the reason indicated, has overpaid taxes in the amount specified, and

WHEREAS, the Tax Collector has recommended the amount be refunded, be it

RESOLVED, that the tax refund indicated below is hereby approved

Pfizer, Inc - \$4,048.72 - Excess payment

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Billing, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Billing, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Wright

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Councilor Kolnaski had no report.

Councilors Wright, Billing and Sheets all received communications about current budget issues and the school referendum.

2004-0134 Gravel Street Pump Station Dock

GRAVEL STREET PUMP STATION DOCK/PUBLIC ACCESS

Councilor Bond asked for a referral to investigate public access and a new dock at the pump station on Gravel St. She stated this was for the enhancement and development of possible water service in the downtown Mystic area. Mayor Watson referred to Environment & Recreation Committee.

Mayor Watson attended a COG meeting, a Groton Utilities 100th Anniversary Breakfast, and introduced Senator Dodd who spoke about medicare at the Groton Senior Center. He met with Capt. Rattee, the Town Manager and other Town staff at the Sub Base on the privatization of 1498 units of base housing with a worth of approximately \$3 million. The Mayor has agreed to write a monthly Groton interest article starting in May for the Mystic River Press. Mayor Watson met with the Groton Times to provide an understanding of Groton. He attended the Installation of Officers at the Groton Lodge of Elks. He assisted the Board of Education with a short information film clip for the school referendum to be aired on Channel 19. He attended the Senior Services Fair at the Senior Center. Mayor Watson received six e-mails and is providing copies to the Town Clerk. The Mayor assisted a fifth grade student from Waterbury on a Social Studies report by providing miscellaneous pamphlets, brochures, a Groton pin, map and background information about Groton.

b. Representative Town Meeting

Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox reported the RTM will be meeting April 14, 2004 and has started its committee budget deliberations.

c. Clerk of the Council

Ms. Tarbox recognized Carol Kimball, James Streeter and Marilyn Comrie on the accomplishment of the recent publication of the "IMAGES of America GROTON" which should be available locally very soon. She attended a symposium for Voting in an "E" Democracy. She stated the town will have an electronic voting machine at each voting place but recommends staying with the old reliable lever type. She feels they have a superior reliability, less chance for tampering and easy operation. She reported that the Allyn-Bolander building sold April 2 for \$9 million to Poker Flats LLC.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger provided notification that work is starting at Bluff Point to provide water service. He was pleased to announce that the Senior Center under the Direction of John Silsby, Director of Parks and Recreation, was recognized with a special Award by the National Council of Aging and the National Institute of Senior Centers. This award has been given to only 100 senior centers nationwide and only three in Connecticut. He recognized Pfizer for receiving the Ninth Annual Connecticut Real Estate Award for renovation work and adaptive re-use of the old Caldor Shopping Center. The Town Manager received a phone call from a representative of Poker Flats LLC reporting that the new owner will be out of town for a month or so. He will keep the Council informed as more information is available on the owner's name and future development of the site. He stated budget sessions are continuing. He announced a Public Information session on April 15, 2004 concerning the installation of Jersey barrier curbing on I-95 in the area of the reservoir. He received notification that the Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial Day Parade will be held in Mystic on May 31 and that responses from the Council or individuals are needed if they want to participate.

e. Town Attorney

The Town Manager received a communication about the appropriateness of mass appeals and how the Board of Assessment Appeals should respond.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Billing

No Report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

No Report.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

A meeting was held; no report.

d. Environment & Recreation - Chairman Sheets

A meeting was held; no report.

e. Finance - Chairman Wright

Chairman Wright provided a brief summary of the meeting held March 23, 2004. They voted unanimously to recommend to the Council that the Town Manager be authorized to apply for the State Historic Documents Preservation Grant. The minutes are on file in the Town Clerk's Office.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman O'Beirne

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent read the minutes due to Councilor O'Beirne's absence. They are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Skrmetti

No Report.

h. Public Works - Chairman Bartinik

No Report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

The committee is meeting continuously discussing the budget.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2003-0177 Renovations & Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I

-Presentation of Environmental Reports on Eastern Point Site and King Property by Fuss & O'Neil

John Hankins, Vice President of Fuss & O'Neil environmental consultants, presented their findings and conclusions and recommended remedial actions on each property. The Eastern Point site had no identified existing problems. The King property had a few problems which he identified. He stated they are minor and are located on the edge of the site. He felt the problems could be fixed easily and the site should be considered eligible for the planned school development project.

-Presentation of Geotechnical Report on King Property by Jeter Cook & Jepson Architects

Gregory Smolley, Senior Associate of Jeter Cook & Jepson, gave a presentation on the findings for the King Property. He explained the test boring locations in regard to determining the buildability of the site, the complexity of the test borings and the impact to the school project. He projects the cost for the necessary work will be under the initial estimates for the project.

The Consultants addressed various questions and concerns that were raised by the Councilors. The Mayor requested the Consultants meet with the Council again after they have reviewed the reports which were distributed just prior to the meeting tonight. The Town Manager stated it could be on next week's agenda. He stated citizens could review the reports at the library, watch the telecast, or call the councilors for more information. Councilor Sheets recognized Dr. Moppett. He stressed the importance of ground water sampling for the King property to avoid health and safety issues on the site. Mr. Hankins of Fuss & O'Neil responded that two samples were taken in areas of concern and no levels for health or safety were exceeded. Mayor Watson called for a brief recess at 10:18 p.m. The meeting resumed at 10:33 p.m.

2004-0117 Summer Food Service Program (2004)

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN IN GROTON

WHEREAS, the US Department of Agriculture provides funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, for a Summer Food Service Program for

Children, and

WHEREAS, the Summer Food Service Program for Children promotes and provides good nutrition during the summer months when at-risk, low-income children are not receiving the benefits of the National School Breakfast and School Lunch Programs through their schools, and

WHEREAS, Groton's West Side Middle School has been approved, in lieu of the qualifying school (Eastern Point School), as the site for Groton's Summer Food Service Program for Children, and

WHEREAS, The Town of Groton's Human Services Department has expressed the desire and demonstrated the ability to provide the required administration of Groton's Summer Food Service Program for Children, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Manager, Mark Oefinger, is authorized to enter into an Agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education for the purpose of establishing and operating a Summer Food Service Program for Children within the Town of Groton during the months of June, July and August 2004 and sign claims for reimbursement, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the absence or incapacity of the first designated individual Town Manager Mark Oefinger, the Town Finance Director, Salvatore M. Pandolfo, is so designated to sign claims for reimbursement.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2004-0118

Establishment of Groton Juvenile Review Board

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GROTON JUVENILE REVIEW BOARD

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut (Senate Bill No. 891), the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Connecticut Juvenile Court system have endorsed the establishment of locally-based Juvenile Review Boards (JRB's) and,

WHEREAS, the Groton Youth Advisory Council, Groton City and Town Police, Groton Public School officials and members of the Groton Board of Education have voiced their support for a Groton Juvenile Review Board, and

WHEREAS, the overall goal of JRB's is to divert identified youth from the juvenile justice system and provide assistance to local police in the handling of juvenile offenders via a coordinated community response, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton Department of Human Services has expressed the interest and the ability, utilizing existing staff and resources, to accept referrals on behalf of the JRB and maintain the confidential records thereof, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Groton Town Council does hereby authorize the establishment of the Groton Juvenile Review Board and designates Groton Human Services to receive and process JRB referrals and maintain JRB confidential files, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Groton Town Manager, Mark R. Oefinger, is hereby authorized to appoint JRB members, for terms to be determined, upon recommendation of the Groton Human Services Department.

This matter was Re-referred to the Town Council Committee of the Whole. The motion carried.

2004-0108

Historic Documents Preservation Grant

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE HISTORIC DOCUMENTS PRESERVATION GRANT

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton will benefit by the continuance of the Historic Document Preservation Program which will be enhanced by grant funding, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Mark R. Oefinger, Town Manager of the Town of Groton, or the Town Clerk as his designee, is empowered to execute and deliver in the name of and on behalf of this municipality, an application and contract with the State Library for an Historic Preservation Grant of up to \$12,000.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Wright, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2004-0116**Department of Education Grant - Youth and Families****RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TOWN MANAGER TO APPLY FOR FUNDING FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR THE TOWN OF GROTON'S YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES FY 2005 GRANT**

WHEREAS, continued short-term counseling, crisis intervention, group work and programs are needed for Groton youth and families and

WHEREAS, funding is available from the State of Connecticut Department of Education to supplant a portion of the salaries of Groton's Youth and Family Services Counselors who provide intervention and prevention services for at-risk Groton youth , therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Manager, Mark R. Oefinger, is authorized to file an application with the State of Connecticut Department of Education (DOE) for funding in an amount to be determined by the DOE and amend contractual agreements for such funding to ensure continuation of short-term counseling, crisis intervention, support programs and group work with Groton youth and families during the period of July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005.

A motion was made by Councilor Billing, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2004-0123**Appointment of Catherine Kolnaski to Ledge Light Health District Board of Directors****RESOLUTION APPOINTING CATHERINE KOLNASKI TO THE LEDGE LIGHT HEALTH DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

RESOLVED, that Catherine Kolnaski, 26 Miner Street, is appointed to the Ledge Light Health District Board of Directors for a term ending 11/10/04.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2004-0124**Appointment of Gerald Smith to the Parks and Recreation Commission****RESOLUTION APPOINTING GERALD T. SMITH TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

RESOLVED, that Gerald T. Smith, 86 Pequot Avenue, Mystic, is appointed to the Parks and Recreation Commission for a term ending 12/31/06.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2004-0125**Appointment of Douglas Brandt to the Zoning Commission****RESOLUTION APPOINTING DOUGLAS BRANDT TO THE ZONING COMMISSION**

RESOLVED, that Douglas Brandt, 82 High Meadow Lane, Mystic, is appointed to the Zoning

Commission for a term ending 12/31/06.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 10:50 p.m. was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

Sally Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk